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Smokey Bear– The First 50 Years

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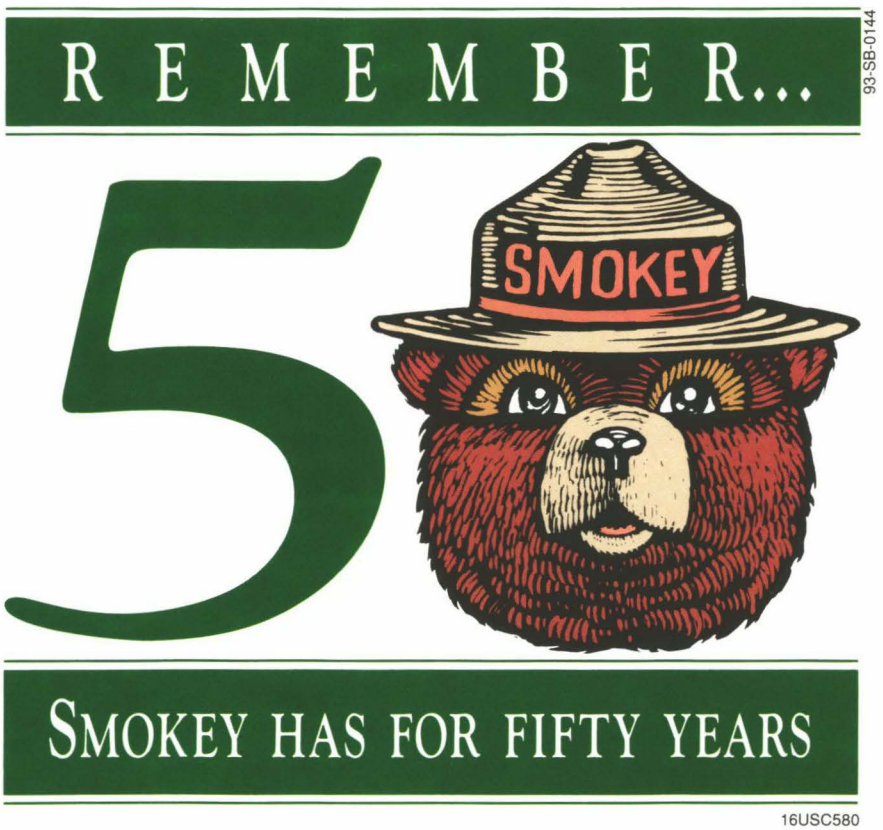
Smokey Bear–The First Fifty Years

As Smokey Bear celebrates his golden anniversary in the summer of 1994, this landmark in forest fire prevention gives us an opportunity to look back at what he symbolizes. Even after 50 years, Smokey Bear is still the most memorable public service advertising symbol in the United States.



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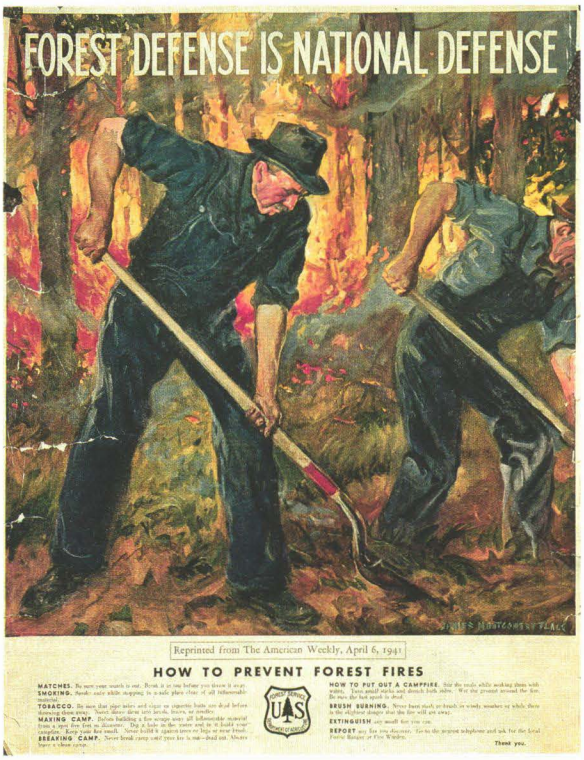

War Years

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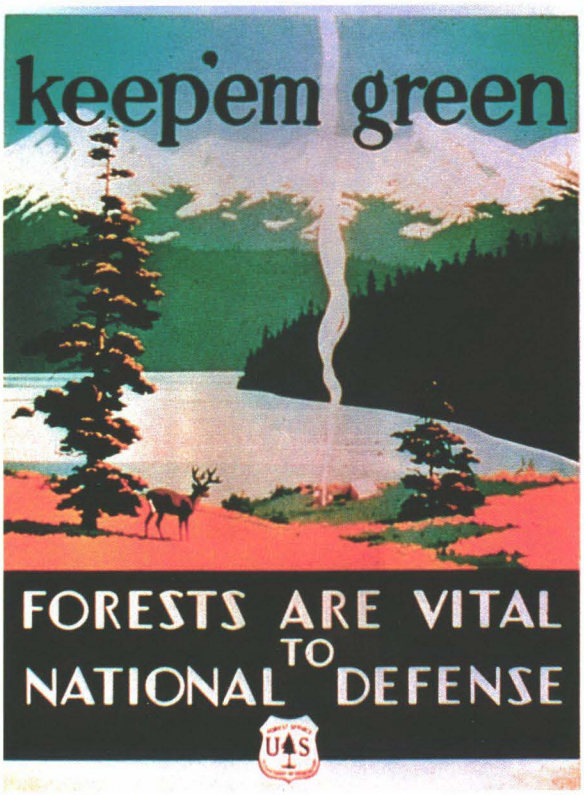


War Years

Two early posters illustrate how the forest fire prevention message was carried to a defense-minded America.

The War Years

Although for half a century Smokey Bear has cautioned America to be careful with fire while enjoying the forest, the idea of preventing carelessly caused wildfire came long before his time. This idea quickly grew into a necessity. With the advent of World War II, Americans feared that an enemy attack or sabotage could destroy our forest resources at a time when wood products were greatly needed.

As a result of this concern, the USDA Forest Service organized the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) Program in 1942. It encouraged citizens nationwide to make a personal effort to prevent forest fires. To help convey the concept to the public, the Forest Service asked the War Advertising Council for assistance. This newly formed group of advertisers volunteered their time, expertise, and portions of their media schedules to help the Government mobilize civilian support for the war effort.

The Council recognized the importance of protecting our forests from fire and began a campaign that encouraged people to assist the war effort by doing what they could to prevent forest fires. Timber was, after all, a primary commodity for battleships, gunstocks, and packing crates for military transport.

In 1944, the Council produced an appealing poster featuring Walt Disney's "Bambi" character. The success of this poster demonstrated that an animal of the forest was the best messenger to promote the prevention of accidental forest fires. On August 2, 1944, the Forest Service and the War Advertising Council introduced a bear as the campaign symbol. This bear was to be black or brown and his expression intelligent, appealing, and slightly quizzical. To look his part, he would wear a traditional campaign hat.

Albert Staehle, noted illustrator of animals, worked with this description to paint the forest fire prevention bear. His art appeared in the 1945 campaign, and the advertising symbol was given the name "Smokey Bear." This first poster carried the caption: "Smokey says: Care will prevent 9 out of 10 forest fires."

Bambi, a Walt Disney Character who escaped a forest fire, was a natural subject for a forest fire prevention poster.

Staehle's art for the first 2 years showed Smokey Bear already actively engaged in the business of forest fire prevention.

As the campaign grew, Smokey reached out to Americans from posters and roadside billboards, from the pages of magazines and newspapers, and over the air from hundreds of broadcasting stations. Many major corporations donated valuable advertising time and space. The result was great success for the Smokey Bear symbol and a decrease in accidental, human-caused forest fires.

93-SB-0122

1947

93-SB-3863

1949

The award-winning, creative energy for this campaign has been provided continuously through the years by Foote, Cone & Belding, a volunteer agency for the Advertising Council.

The Campaign Develops

After World War II, the War Advertising Council changed its name to the Advertising Council. In the years that followed, the focus of Smokey's campaign broadened to appeal to children as well as adults.

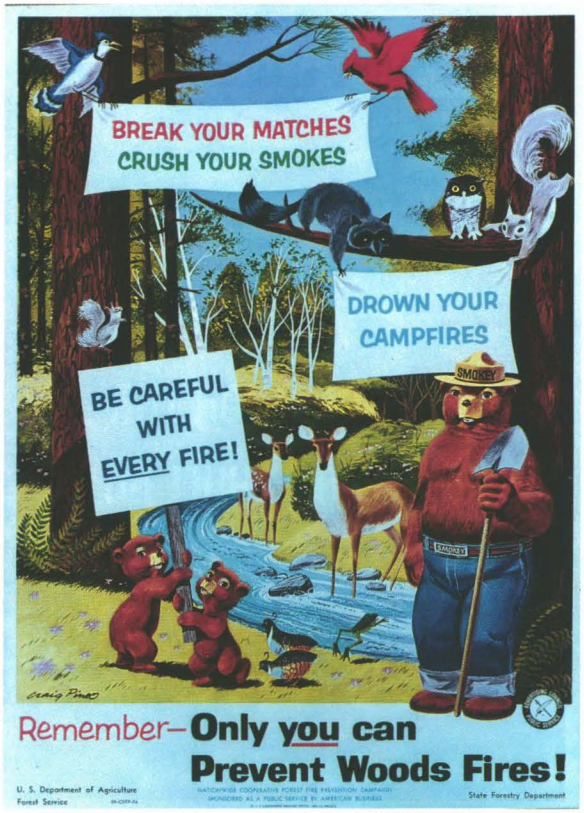
93-SB-0152

1955

93-SB-0153

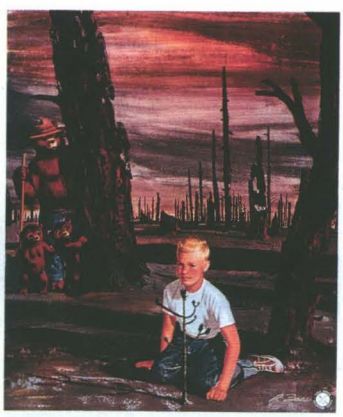
1956

93-SB-0154



1959

93-SB-0131



Fire destroys his trees, too

REMEMBER–ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES!

1957

Since its creation by Chuck Kuderna, this rendition of Smokey Bear has served as the model for all other Smokey art.

The earliest pictures of Smokey Bear varied in appearance from year to year, but his confident, friendly manner and the good sense of his fire prevention message were always there. It was not until the work of Chuck Kuderna, during the 1965 campaign, that Smokey's image evolved into the one we know today.

In addition to the public service advertising campaign, there were other needs for original art in the CFFP Program. In 1946, Rudy Wendelin, an artist for the Forest Service, began producing a tremendous quantity of Smokey Bear art in various media for special events, publications, and licensed products to promote the fire prevention symbol. Long after retiring, he created the art for the Smokey Bear 40th anniversary commemorative U.S. postage stamp. In Forest Service circles he is still known affectionately as "Smokey's artist."

Smokey Bear's 40th anniversary was celebrated by the issuance of a commemorative U.S. postage stamp.

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Rudy Wendelin at work in 1954.

A Live Bear

A significant chapter in Smokey's long history began early in 1950, when a burned cub survived a fire in the Lincoln National Forest near Capitan, New Mexico. Because this bear survived a terrible forest fire and won the love and imagination of the American public, many people mistakenly believe that this cub was the original Smokey Bear, but in reality he did not come along until the advertising symbol was almost 6 years old.

After being nursed back to health, Smokey came to live at the National Zoo in Washington, DC, as a living counterpart to the CFFP Program's fire prevention symbol.

Judy Bell, who helped Smokey back to health after his rescue, received a Golden Smokey award from President Eisenhower in 1958.

The burned cub being treated by a veterinarian in Santa Fe.

After his bandages were removed, the cub returned to visit the plane that took him to the doctor.

93-SB-0126

1972

Rudy Wendelin's 1972 watercolor depicts Smokey, his mate Goldie, and his adoptive son, little Smokey, greeting the pandas on their arrival at the National Zoo.

93-SB-0157

1975

Smokey's farewell 1975 retirement poster.

Over the years, thousands of people from around the world came to see Smokey Bear at the National Zoo. A mate (Goldie) was introduced with the hope a young Smokey would continue the tradition of the famous living symbol. These efforts failed and an adopted son was sent to the zoo so the aged bear could retire on May 2, 1975. After many years of popularity, the original Smokey Bear died in 1976. His remains were returned to Capitan and rest beneath a stone marker in Smokey Bear State Park. For over 15 years, the adopted Smokey carried on as the living symbol, but in 1990, when the second Smokey Bear died, the living symbol was laid to rest.

Protecting Smokey Bear's Image

Early in Smokey Bear's career, the Forest Service realized that it needed to protect this popular image. In 1952, Congress passed Public Law 359, better known as the "Smokey Bear Act," stating specific rules and regulations to guard against misuse of the fire prevention symbol. In the same year, a licensing program began which still controls the manufacturing for sale of items using the Smokey Bear name or image. The Forest Service collects royalties from licensees, and the proceeds are returned to the CFFP Program for use in furthering forest fire prevention.

Smokey Bear as Teacher

The Junior Forest Ranger program began with the marketing of a licensed product. When Ideal Toys produced a Smokey Bear stuffed toy in 1952, the company received permission to include an application form that a child could mail to the Forest Service, asking to become a Junior Forest Ranger. The response was overwhelming. More than 500,000 youngsters enrolled during the first 3 years. By 1955, Smokey was receiving so much mail he was assigned his own Zip Code.[1]

Children may still write and ask to become Junior Forest Rangers. They will receive a kit containing a letter from Smokey, a badge, a membership card, and a wallet card. One of the primary goals of the CFFP Program is to introduce children of elementary school age to the forest fire prevention message. Today, children remain Smokey's most ardent supporters.

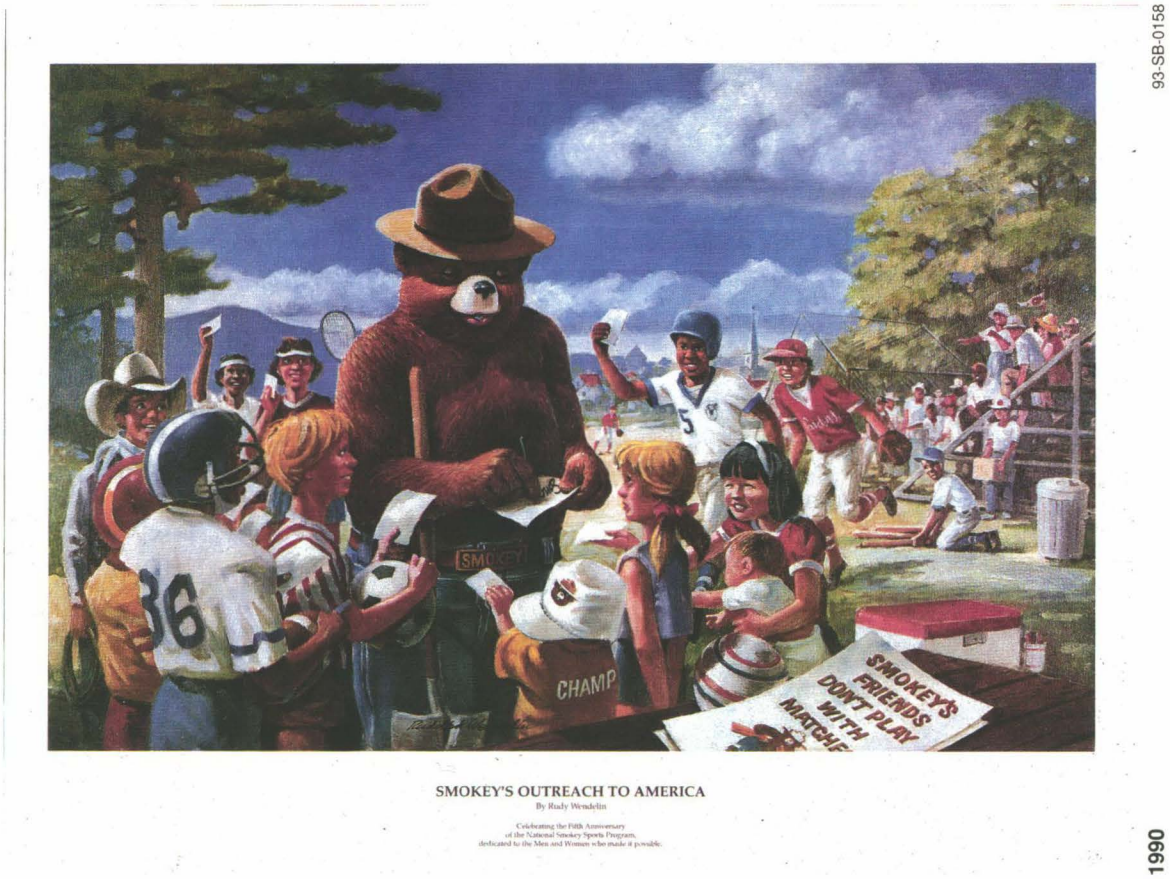
[1] Smokey Bear Headquarters, Washington, DC 20252

In recent years, the CFFP Program has broadened its scope from public service advertising and educational materials to include personal appearances by people dressed in approved Smokey Bear costumes. The first appearances at professional sports events proved so popular that the program evolved into "Smokey Sports." Today, "Special Prevention Activities" encompass a variety of sporting and educational events at all levels, including rodeos nationwide through "Smokey and the American Cowboy."

All of these successful programs take Smokey and his wildfire prevention message to grassroots America. Special Prevention Activities localize the message and get communities involved in wildfire prevention. Through these special events, people of all ages interact with Smokey Bear. As a result, he now enjoys more recognition than ever before.

Smokey Gives a Helping Paw

Firefighters everywhere accept Smokey Bear as the symbol for wildfire prevention and give him deserved recognition for a job will done. As early as 1949, smokejumpers honored Smokey Bear at a jump exhibition in Washington, DC, which kicked off the CFFP Program's annual awareness campaign. Smokey Bear often accompanies Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and State uniformed personnel into schools to teach


93-SB-0158
SMOKEY'S OUTREACH TO AMERICA
By Rudy Wendelin
Celebrating the Fifth Anniversary
of the National Smokey Sports Program,
dedicated to the Men and Women who made it possible.
1990

A Rudy Wendelin painting celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Smokey Sports program.

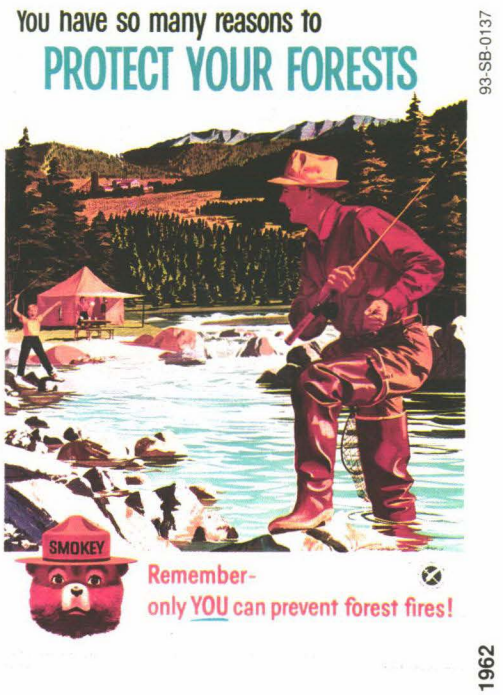
young children how to prevent wildfire and the importance of conserving our Nation's precious resources.

However, it has not always been an easy path for the fire prevention bear. Some people say Smokey Bear's message leaves no room for fire as a vital part of a forest's ecology. From the beginning, Smokey's very focused mission has been to educate people in what *they can do* to prevent accidental wildfires. Although Smokey Bear's wildfire prevention message is as memorable as it is long lasting, today's professionals recognize it as but one tool in ecosystem management.

New Challenges

Smokey's task is becoming increasingly difficult. In years past, it was a challenge for his message to reach traditional visitors to the forest. Now we are faced with getting his wildfire prevention message to an increasing number of people who live in and around these areas. This "wildland-urban interface" poses a double threat; from people living in or near forests who may accidently start fires that spread to the wildlands as well as from accidental fires started in the wild that spread to nearby residences. In either case, the result is potentially disastrous but especially tragic because it is preventable.

The challenge continues as Smokey Bear passes the half-century mark and begins the next 50 years. Demand for our dwindling natural resources continues to grow as does the population of forested areas. In the future, the need to prevent accidental wildfire will be greater than ever.

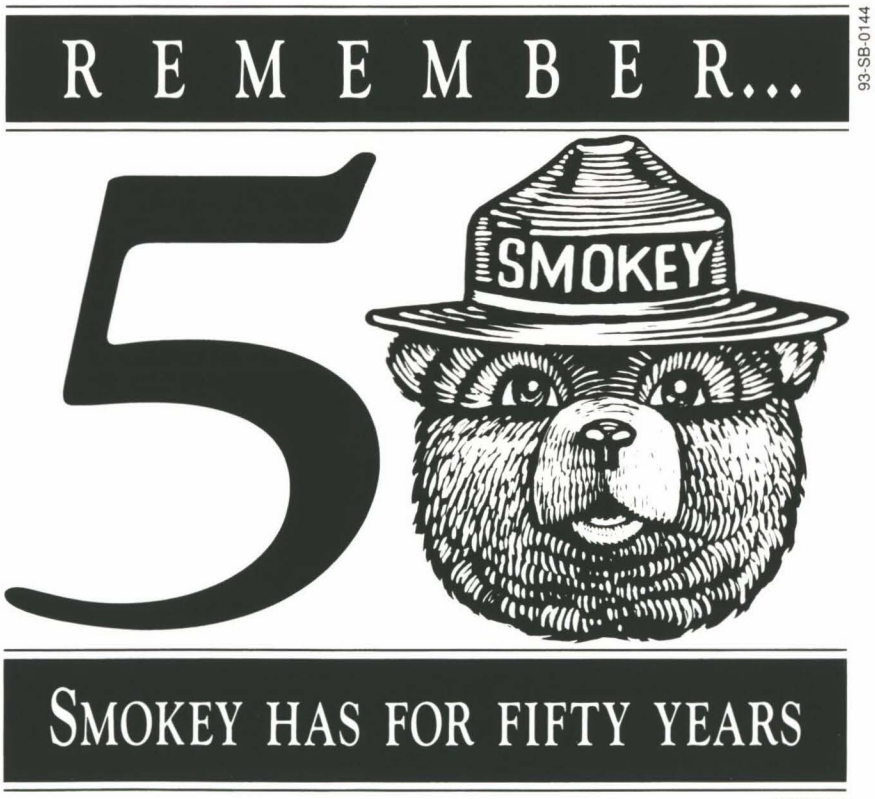


Smokey reminds us that natural resources are also lost when careless forest fires occur.

Trash fires are a constant threat to nearby wildlands.

Many of us who saw Smokey Bear emerge in 1944 taught our children about him. We enjoy hearing them, in turn, tell their own children the story of the fire-preventing bear. Thus, his message and his legacy are passed from generation to generation. His fame is carried on by people who believe in his mission. As it has been for 50 years, children will continue to eagerly listen to Smokey's wildfire prevention message and stories about the bear who tries so hard to help us save our beautiful forests and wildlands from careless fire. And all of us, whatever our age, need Smokey to keep reminding us:

"Remember...Only *YOU* Can Prevent Forest Fires!"



Smokey Bear's 50th Anniversary Commemorative Logo.

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October 1993

93-SB-0159

REMEMBER...

50

SMOKEY HAS FOR FIFTY YEARS

16USC580

We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there.

— CHARLES F. KETTERING

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